

# PTSD TREATMENT WORKS: TAKE THE STEP TOWARDS RECOVERY

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental health concern that some people develop after going through or witnessing a life-threatening event, like combat, a natural disaster, a car accident, or sexual assault. But treatment can help. Learn the steps you or a loved one can take to get on the road to recovery.



## SIGNS OF PTSD

If you or someone you know is experiencing any of the following symptoms, contact a healthcare provider to get screened for PTSD:

- 1 Feeling like a traumatic event is happening again, often through nightmares or flashbacks.
- 2 Avoiding situations that remind you of the event, including not talking or thinking about the event.
- 3 Having more negative beliefs and feelings, including not being interested in activities you once enjoyed.
- 4 Feeling keyed up (also called hyperarousal), including feeling jittery and having trouble sleeping or concentrating.



## WHAT CAN I DO IF I THINK I HAVE PTSD?

After a traumatic event, it's normal to think, act, and feel differently than usual. But if your symptoms last more than a few weeks, are very upsetting, or disrupt your daily life, you should seek help:

- ✓ Talk to someone you trust
- ✓ Take a self-screen for PTSD



## PRIMARY CARE PTSD SCREEN (PC-PTSD)

PTSD screens, like the one below, can be used to determine if you have PTSD. If you receive a positive score, follow-up with your healthcare provider and tell them you may have PTSD.

In your life, have you ever had any experience that was so frightening, horrible, or upsetting that, **in the past month**, you:

- 1 Have had nightmares about it or thought about it when you did not want to?  
**YES / NO**
- 2 Tried hard not to think about it or went out of your way to avoid situations that reminded you of it?  
**YES / NO**
- 3 Were constantly on guard, watchful, or easily startled?  
**YES / NO**
- 4 Felt numb or detached from others, activities, or your surroundings?  
**YES / NO**
- 5 Felt guilty or unable to stop blaming yourself or others for the event(s) or any problems the event(s) may have caused?  
**YES / NO**

Current research suggests that the results of the PC-PTSD should be considered "positive" if you answer "yes" to any three items. A positive response to the screen does not necessarily mean that you have PTSD, but it is a sign that you should seek additional help from a mental healthcare professional.

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## UNDERSTANDING EFFECTIVE TREATMENT OPTIONS

Treatment for PTSD *works*. Individual trauma-focused psychotherapies are the most highly recommended type of treatment. They can help symptoms and improve wellbeing, general health, and functioning. The trauma-focused treatments that work the best are:



### Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)

CPT teaches you how to change the upsetting thoughts and feelings you have had since your trauma.



### Prolonged Exposure (PE)

PE teaches you to gradually approach trauma-related memories, feelings, and situations you have been avoiding since your trauma.



### Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

EMDR helps you process and make sense of your trauma while paying attention to a back-and-forth movement or sound (such as a light or tone).

Other types of recommended trauma-focused psychotherapies exist. Talk to your healthcare provider about what makes the most sense for you and use the National Center for PTSD's [PTSD Treatment Decision Aid](#) to learn more about them.

## MEDICATION CAN ALSO HELP

Medications that help treat symptoms of depression and anxiety can also help reduce symptoms of PTSD. If you and your healthcare provider decide to try medication, the [VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guidelines for PTSD](#) recommends the following antidepressants:



- Sertraline
- Paroxetine
- Fluoxetine
- Venlafaxine

## CHOOSE THE BEST TREATMENT FOR YOU

Work with your healthcare provider to determine the best treatment option. Ask the following questions to know what to expect:

1. Do I have PTSD?
2. What are my treatment options?
3. How often will I have to come in for treatment and how long does treatment last?
4. What can I expect from treatment?

**Learn More:** Visit the [National Center for PTSD's website](#) for more information on PTSD treatment.